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Introduction

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Introduction: Sport and Social Transformation in Brazil

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Across Latin America, sport represents an important cultural and political response to facilitating social transformation and addressing social challenges, and this is especially evident today in Brazil. Brazil is also one of many nations to have emphasised a positive relationship between sport and progressive social and economic development (Reis et al., 2016). This relationship is best seen in its development and modernisation strategy where bidding to host mega-sports events was one catalyst for driving change and earning global recognition (Rojek, 2013). What was termed Brazil's 'sporting decade' (Reis et al., 2013) saw successful bids and the hosting of the 2007 Pan American Games, the 2014 men's FIFA Football World Cup and the 2016 Rio Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games. Enjoying global prestige and an international perception of economic and social stability, Brazil was ready to participate in globalisation processes. Sport, therefore, enabled Brazil, like other host nations before them, to align its social, political, and economic structures with Global North worldviews to facilitate its transformation into a modernised 'developed' and globally competitive nation (Maharaj, 2015).

Since the hosting of sporting mega-events, much academic literature about the critical impact of sport on Brazil and its society emerged (e.g., Reis et al., 2015; Gaffney, 2016; Wise and Hall, 2017). This special issue contributes a collection of papers dedicated to assessing important points of academic inquiry going forward. The global media regularly focuses on the performance of a minority population of elite athletes. However, sport, when assessed more broadly, impacts upon individuals and communities locally – the majority of whom will not participate in or follow any particular sport, but see significant amounts of government funds redirected to build venues for sporting events.

The papers included in this special issue bring together several recently completed projects that have demonstrated alternative narratives about the impact of sport on Brazilian society. Each paper challenges us to reflect more critically on the breadth and reach of sporting legacies beyond tangible urban regeneration, the 'exoticism' of Brazil as a destination, and 'sport is good' mantras that are perpetuated in popular conceptions of

sport and its proxy affiliations. This special issue begins with Christopher Gaffney asking: can we blame Rio? Gaffney's paper addresses a number of crises affecting the city that will, for the foreseeable future, continue to take its toll on the city's political economy and its residents. The following two papers are empirical projects examining the impact of FIFA on violation of children's rights under the banner of 'securitisation', and the impact of pacification processes in the *comunidades* of Rio de Janeiro on sex workers is discussed in articles by Lorraine van Blerk et al. and Amanda de Lisio and João Gabriel R. Sodr , respectively. The fourth article, by Gareth Hall and Arianne Reis, examines the social transformation narrative of programme leaders who implemented large-scale sport-for-development projects in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Their paper addresses the inclusion of the sport of rugby in the Summer Olympics, which has since leveraged opportunities to develop rugby in school communities as an alternative to football. The final article by Nicholas Wise, concerning the case of Manaus, provides a conceptual paper that frames the need for ethnographic research to uncover social impacts of change inductively to gain a more enabling representation of sport and social transformation. Each paper offers conceptual and methodological insight useful for scholars looking at issues and controversies surrounding sport and social transformation across Latin America and beyond.

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